



# GODMEN INFLUENCE ON THE LIVES OF URBAN SOCIETY PEOPLE: AN EXPLORATION

Dr. Navleen Kaur<sup>1</sup> | Nupur Nag<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Dept. of Community Education and Disability Studies, Punjab University, Sector-14, Chandigarh, India.

<sup>2</sup> Master's Student, Dept. of Community Education & Disability Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh, India.

## ABSTRACT

India through the decades has witnessed the prevalence of godmen. Often, these godmen who act as magicians, miracle-workers, healers, priests, mystics and masters of all spiritual energies, mislead public especially, the urban and educated and amass illegal wealth. The enormous human appetite for miracles is unrelenting. We want miracles to happen to us, particularly, when we are surrounded with insurmountable odds resulting in hopelessness and despair. A persisting problem, lack of awareness, financial, physical or social constraints, a failed support system and an environment fed on blind faith leads us to an address which offers hope, instant gratification and a promise to a miracle. Corruption and favouritism in India have shattered a common man's belief in talent and merit, pushing him to surrender to the concept of luck and believing in miracles. Hence, there is need to create awareness among the urban people regarding Godmen. The objective of the study was to explore the impact of Godmen on the lives of urban society people. The hypothesis framed for the study was 'There will be no impact of Godmen on the lives of urban society people.' Primary data was collected with the help of self-constructed questionnaire which consisted of 17 questions. The sample comprised of 100 people living in Chandigarh. The data was analyzed and interpreted with the help of question-wise tabular representation. The study found that in the urban society, some people believe in Godmen or are influenced by them. Finally, paper would provide succinct suggestions for creating awareness among the people.

**KEYWORDS:** Godmen, urban society people, miracles

## INTRODUCTION:

Godmen is a colloquial term used in India for a type of charismatic guru. They usually have a highly profile presence, and are capable of attracting attention and support from large section of the society. Godmen also sometimes claim to possess paranormal powers, the ability to heal, the ability to see or influence future events and the ability to read minds.

The origin of Godmen and their popularity today can be traced back to guru Shishya tradition of Hinduism. Godmen reverse as special human beings and often worshipped by their followers. Some Godmen come from established schools of spirituality, but often they don't belong to any religious order. In Hinduism there is no centrally established religious authority, so people tend to follow such charismatic personalities. These gurus tend to live in their own ashrams. Many of these Godmen acknowledge having had a guru themselves, as per the guru shishya tradition. In recent years, many Godmen have gained followers outside of India, which has increased their fame and wealth.

Satya Sai Baba (1926-2011) was a notable Godmen with a very large following. He was known for his miracles like materialising sacred ash (vibhuti), and other objects like watches and jewels. He was also involved in charitable works, which include a hospital and a university.

While the West was exploring the physical world, India has been busy exploring the mystical world, the inner world. The difference is that the physical world can be mapped, navigated and quantified, whereas the inner, mystical world can't be mapped. Ask anyone what's beyond that building and you will get the same answer from Google Maps or a passerby. Ask what's beyond this life and you will get infinite answers, entangling you in a web of utter confusion. So spiritual and religious gurus work like Google Maps to solve this confusion about the universe of the unknown. The problem is that unlike Google, here everyone has a different map. While the western approach stands on scientific proof and documentation, the Indian approach begins and ends with unanswered questions and mystics.

However in current times, we have seen fraudsters, scamsters and rapists masquerade as religious gurus. They have palaces, a fleet of cars, all kinds of luxuries, gold, diamonds and a mass of land. Some of them have their own militia, like we saw in a recent case where this 'murderer' godman resorted to human-fortification. Most of these godmen are charged with human trafficking, rape, drug dealing, sex trade, murders, money laundering, political lobbying etc.

## IMPORTANCE OF GODMEN:

With society being in constant flux in the last two decades due to socio-economic factors, the need to rely on a higher power seems to have also increased. In a country of a million gods and thousand identities, the changing landscapes have had huge cultural and psychological implications. Rootless individuals seeking to make sense of their world may drift to alcohol, drugs or psychiatrist to find answers. In India, most seem to have drifted to the Godmen.

It's not difficult to understand why India has had a long history of gurus or spiri-

tual guides- the learned master who helped people attain higher knowledge. In recent times, the tradition seems to have metamorphosed into an industry, with Godmen exploiting weaknesses of existing institutions like family, religion and society to their advantage, and offering instantaneous miracles and quick fix solutions to cure the dissonance caused by modern life. The changing socio-economic structure has only widened this chasm further, adding to people's stresses and anxieties, making them more vulnerable to the antics of the dubious Godmen.

The reason people trust Godmen in India can be understood by the ancient, medieval and modern contexts of Indian religion and spirituality transitions. In ancient world culture, every religion had almost started visualising godly and supernatural forces in human figures and had started portraying in forms analogous to day to day real life objects. India on the other hand, during Vedic ages had not developed any idols of god and was limited to godly or holy spirits in forms of prayers and enchanting.

It was post Vedic period especially after Mauryan period people actually started developing idols to represent their faith and religions. The reasons were simple. Idol worshipping was a much better way of visualising holiness instead of plain prayers and spiritual talks. People now carved their imagination and spirituality into rocks and woods to call the God's and worship them. Spirituality now after idol worship became more convenient and effective in connecting devotees' faith and their spirituality and beliefs can now be realised instantly via a human form. These idols were easy to carry and people of every caste, class and society could have their own personal gods and expressing faith by building a small temple under a tree to a giant stone carved temples now, concreted the foundations of how common mass wanted to visualise their religion.

Once the idea of God in human forms was established and religions became popular, people started gravitating towards devotion and related practices. People who succeeded to do so became ambassadors of the religion establishing themselves as humans nearest to God which later evolved into Godmen who knew the stories, rituals, God's will and the holy path leading to your divine union with god himself. It is here that Godmen became incarnation of God himself and started dictating the common religious masses. It is thus became a common practice and part of the religion.

The world and India after industrialisation were undergoing rapid changes. Connectivity increased in terms of travel and print media. Words started spreading. The story of Supernatural and magic by Godmen captured the heart of common Indian people. With the advent of electronic media and televisions the Godmen now became a nationwide phenomenon.

Today, Godmen have a huge fan following, they have their own scheduled TV slots and even channels. The capital involved is gigantic. The media coverage is extensive. The venues, sold out. The blessings are being showered on donations. Mostly Godmen counsel the people in their difficult times.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

It is often found in Indian society that Godmen mislead public, especially the urban and educated, and amass illegal wealth. Godmen or babas exploit their followers physically or mentally. So there is need to create awareness among the people.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:**

**GODMEN:** They have a high profile presence, and are capable of attracting attention and support from large sections of the society. They possess paranormal powers, such as the ability to heal, the ability to see and the ability to read minds.

**URBAN PEOPLE:** Human settlement with high population of built environment. Such people live in cities, towns etc.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Dawra (2017) found that not only the illiterate and poor people follow the Godmen but the rich and educated people or politicians also follow the Godmen or Babas.

Gupta (2014) focused that people follow the Godmen because in India people are divided into many castes, where each order or caste has a different prescription of what is a good life and how to lead it.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The objective of the study is to explore the impact of Godmen on the lives of urban society people.

**HYPOTHESIS:**

There will be no impact of Godmen on the lives of urban society people.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The data was analyzed by using descriptive method. Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire which consisted of 17 questions.

**SAMPLE:**

The study covered the sample of 100 people living in Sector 41, Chandigarh.

**TOOLS:**

Self-constructed questionnaire was used for the study which consisted of 17 questions with various options.

**DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:**

The data was analyzed and interpreted with the help of question-wise tabular representation given below:

**1. Age of the respondent:****Table No. 1**

Age range	Percentage
18-35	24%
36-50	35%
50 above	41%

The above table shows that 41% of the respondents were more than 50 years of age. Whereas, 24% respondents fell in the age range of 18 to 35 years. While nearly one-third of them, i.e. 35% belonged to 36 to 50 years of age.

**2. Are you male or female:****Table No. 2**

Gender	Percentage
Male	49%
Female	51%

According to Table No.2, 49% of the respondents were males while 51% were females. This shows that almost equal number of both the gender gave their responses.

**3. Education Qualification of the respondent:****Table No. 3**

Educational Qualification	Percentage
Primary	15%
Higher Secondary	30%
Senior Secondary	35%
Graduate or above	14%
Illiterate	6%

Perusal of table no. 3 shows that 35% of the respondents studied upto senior secondary which constituted the majority of the respondents. Moreover, 15% were qualified upto primary education and 30% studied till higher secondary. 14% of the respondents were graduates or above whereas only 6% were illiterate persons.

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**4. Economic status of the respondent:****Table No. 4**

Economic Status	Percentage
Working	57%
Household	23%
Student	17%
Unemployed	3%

The study depicts that 57% of respondents were from working class and 23% did household work. Whereas, 17% were students and 3% were unemployed.

**5. Do you believe in any Godmen (Baba):****Table No. 5**

Response	Percentage
Yes	37%
No	63%

According to given table, 37% respondents believed in Godmen (Baba) while 63% did not believe in them.

**6. In which you believe:****Table No. 6**

Believer	Percentage
God of religion	15%
Saint	9%
Fiction reader	10%
Motivational guru	31%
None of above	35%

The study depicts that 15% of the respondents believed in God of religion, 9% in saints and 10% in fiction reader. It further depicts that 31% had faith in motivational guru while 35% did not believe in any of the previous mentioned.

**7. On whose suggestion did you visit for the first time:****Table No. 7**

Response	Percentage
Relatives/Friends	20%
On hearing/publicity	6%
Family tradition	11%
Or never gone	63%

It was found that 20% and 6% of the respondents visited the Godmen for the first time as suggested by their relatives/ friends and on hearing/publicity respectively. 11% of them went as a family tradition, whereas, 63% had never visited the Godmen.

**8. Which one of the following as per you will be Regarded for betterment of society:****Table No. 8**

Response	Percentage
God of religion	15%
Saint	8%
Fiction reader	16%
Motivational Guru	37%
None of the above	24%

According to the findings, 15% respondents regarded God of Religion, 8% regarded saints, 16% regarded fiction reader and 37% regarded motivational guru for betterment of the society. While, 24% of the respondents did not consider these people for the betterment of the society.

**9. According to you, in which situation people mostly visit to Godmen:****Table No. 9**

Response	Percentage
Sickness/difficulty times	14%
Child relating problems	19%
Peace of mind	29%
Poverty	25%
None of the above	13%

An analysis of the study shows that 14% respondents mostly visited Godmen during sickness/difficulty times, 19% went due to child related problems, 29% visited for peace of mind whereas 25% went because of poverty. 13% respondents never went because of the above situations.

**10. What do you think is the most attracting quality of godmen for devotees:**

**Table No. 10**

Quality	Percentage
Knowledge	11%
Name or fame	16%
Religious vision	13%
Miracle	38%
Dressing sense	7%
None of the above	15%

As far as the most attracting quality of godmen is concerned, 11% responded it is knowledge, 16% said name or fame, 13% answered religious vision, 38% believed in miracles and 7% responded to dressing sense. But, 15% did not believe in above mentioned qualities.

**11. Have you ever witness of miracle of any godmen:**

**Table No. 11**

Response	Percentage
Yes I have seen	7%
Not seen doing miracle	35%
I have just heard	58%

The above table depicts that only 7% respondents had witnessed the miracles of godmen while 35% had not seen any godmen doing miracles. Furthermore, 58% respondents had just heard about such miracles.

**12. How is the image of any godmen mostly created through:**

**Table No. 12**

Response	Percentage
Expensive propaganda	12%
Talks of his/her miracles	13%
Leaders/actors/players believe in saints	58%
Religious TV channels	12%
None of the above	5%

It was found that 12% of the respondents believed that the image of any godmen is mostly created through expensive propaganda and religious TV channels each. While 13% believe their image is created through talks of their miracles, but majority of them, which was 58%, responded their image is created because leaders or actors or players believe in saints. 5% respondents replied that their image is not created due to previously mentioned reasons.

**13. Do you feel that because of some corrupt godmen, all the Gods of religion are getting bad name:**

**Table No. 13**

Response	Percentage
Yes	64%
No	36%

Table no.13 shows that 64% respondents agreed that because of some corrupt godmen, all the Gods of religion are getting bad name while 36% respondents did not agree to this.

**14. When you hear about any corrupt Godmen, what happens to your devotion towards them:**

**Table No. 14**

Response	Percentage
Decreases	9%
Still respect them	12%
Every saint seems doubtful	16%
None of the above	63%

The above table reveals that whenever the respondents heard about any corrupt Godmen, 9% of them responded that their devotion decreased towards them, 12% still respected them, whereas 16% replied every saint seemed doubtful. The devotion of 63% respondents had not changed after hearing about any corrupt Godmen.

**15. Should Godmen, Saints, God of religions, Motivational gurus join politics:**

**Table No. 15**

Response	Percentage
Yes	7%
No	71%
Do not know	22%

Perusal of table no.15 shows that 7% respondents agreed that Godmen, Saints, God of religions, or Motivational gurus should join politics while 71% responded they should not join politics. Furthermore, 22% respondents did not know whether they should join politics or not.

**16. Should the properties of Godmen's organizations or camps, which are spread throughout the nation, be investigated:**

**Table No. 16**

Response	Percentage
Yes	20%
No	5%
Do not know	75%

According to the above table, 20% respondents agreed that properties of Godmen's organizations or camps, which are spread throughout the nation, should be investigated. On the other hand, 5% replied that it should not be investigated. 75% did not know whether it should be done or not.

**17. To keep a check on Godmen's organizations or camps, what should government do:**

**Table No. 17**

Response	Percentage
Nothing because this is related to devotion	5%
Transparent law should be made, CCTV cameras should be made compulsory	25%
Whole property details should be made public	30%
It should be compulsory for political parties to put in their manifestoes that they will not provide any profit to any religion, creed or feeling.	40%

An analysis of the Table no.17 shows that to keep a check on Godmen's organizations or camps, 5% respondents said that government should do nothing because this is related to devotion, 25% respondents said that transparent law should be made, CCTV cameras should be made compulsory. While, 30% respondents replied that whole property details should be made public and 40% said that it should be compulsory for political parties to put in their manifestoes that they will not provide any profit to any religion, creed or feeling.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:**

- 63% respondents did not believe in any godmen and 37% believed in godmen.
- 31% respondents believed in motivational guru and also regarded them for betterment of the society.
- 20% respondents said they visit or go to the godmen for the first time on the suggestion of relatives/friends.
- People visit or go to the godmen in the situations of sickness, child related problems, peace of mind, or poverty.
- The most attracting quality of godmen for devotees is their miracles, name, knowledge, religious vision.
- 71% respondents believed that godmen, saints, or any baba should not join the politics.
- Lacking purpose and sense of direction, people are actively seeking someone to look up to and follow.

Hence, the hypothesis "There will be no impact of Godmen on the lives of urban society people." is rejected because there is an impact of Godmen on the lives of urban society people.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- The first and foremost priority is free and compulsion of education to everyone so its help the people to think rationally instead of believe in Godmen.
- There is need to provide quality of education and provide basic moral values in schools, which helps people to develop confidence among themselves and

they can tackle their day to day life problems.

- Awareness programmes need to be organised for creating awareness among the people regarding difference between God and godmen
- Government should also increase the employment opportunities for people so they can't sit idle or engaged in illegal activities.
- Reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.
- Babas property should be made public by government so people have the idea about how much property they have.
- There should be keep a check on their camps or organisations.
- A law should be made, where CCTV cameras are made compulsory in their camps.
- It should be compulsory for political parties to put in their manifestos that they will not provide any profit to any religion, creed, or any feeling.

#### CONCLUSION:

In the study on Godmen's influence on the lives of urban society people, it is concluded that in the urban society, some people believe in godmen or are influenced by them. Not only illiterate people but educated people are also influenced by them. People mostly believe in motivational gurus or they also regard them for the betterment of the society. People mainly go to godmen in the situations of poverty or if they face financial problems. Godmen's image is mostly created through the religious TV Channels or leaders, players, actors believe in godmen or babas which are mostly highlighted in TV Channels. Moreover, people believe that due to some corrupt godmen or babas, all godmen are getting bad name. Furthermore, godmen should not join the politics because their work is only to counsel the people or motivate people to do right things. No doubt, the godmen play an effective role in their devotees' life but they should not play with their feelings or abuse them in any respect. If we can educate masses with a scientific bent, give our law-enforcers support to be fearless and unbiased, ensure healthcare for all, regulate media to stop airing unscientific advertisements, these miracle babas and godmen will disappear from our religious horizon which would be the real miracle.

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